



University
of Victoria

Graduate Studies

Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Master of Arts

of

HEEJIN KIM

BA (University of British Columbia, 2015)

**“Extraordinary People, Extraordinary Wisdom: How Can Professional
Ballet Dancers Persevere in Their Performance Career”**

Department of Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies

Friday, April 26, 2019
4:00pm
Clearihue Building
Room B007

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Susan Tasker, Department of Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies,
University of Victoria (Supervisor)

Dr. Yan Shen, Department of Business, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:

Dr. Rebecca Hudson-Breen, Department of Educational Psychology, University of Alberta

Chair of Oral Examination:

Dr. Eva Kwool, Department of Geography, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies

Abstract

Several studies have reported various challenges ballet dancers experience in their performance careers. However, to date, very little research has been done to understand how professional ballet dancers persevere in their performance careers in the face of the demanding nature and various challenges associated with their career. The purpose of this study was to explore perseverance of professional ballet dancers in their performance career from the perspectives of retired professional ballet dancers. Using a social constructivist lens, the research question addressed in this study was: How can professional ballet dancers persevere in a performance career? Narrative interviews were conducted with participants ($N = 9$) who had danced at one or more professional ballet companies for at least one year and had been involved in the ballet world since their retirement from their performance careers. A thematic analysis was used to analyze the data and 4 themes were identified about persevering as a professional ballet dancer in a performance career: (a) Building and Looking After Your Healthy Sense of Self and Mental Attitude; (b) Navigating Your Career Journey With Intelligence and Courage Within and Beyond One Ballet Company; (c) Growing as an Artist to Have More Than Technique and Raw Physicality to Capture an Audience; and (d) Balancing Your Performance Career by Having a Life Outside the Dance World. Implications of the findings for research, practice, and counselling are discussed.